

MAR 26 1940

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THE  
**LIBRARY ASSISTANT**

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The Official Journal  
of the Association of  
Assistant Librarians

**C O N T E N T S**

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# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

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HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON      Hornsey Public Libraries

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## Announcements

### LIST OF OFFICERS AND COUNCIL FOR 1940

*President* : T. I. M. Clulow (Leeds).  
*Vice-President* : F. M. Gardner (Luton).  
*Hon. Secretary* : Douglas E. Coult (Fulham).  
*Hon. Treasurer* : J. T. Gillett (Leeds).  
*Hon. Editor* : W. B. Stevenson (Hornsey).

### NATIONAL COUNCILLORS

W. H. Phillips (Dagenham).  
D. H. Halliday (Croydon).  
S. W. Martin (Lambeth).  
A. R. Hewitt (Middle Temple).  
A. Ll. Carver (Portsmouth).  
R. L. W. Collison (Ealing).  
W. Best Harris (Plymouth).  
Miss M. B. Jones (St. Pancras).

### DIVISIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

*Devon and Cornwall* : H. R. J. Boulter (Paignton, Devon Co.).  
*Eastern* : Not yet appointed.  
*East Midland* : Miss J. C. Bertholdt (Nottingham).  
*Greater London* : S. Horrocks (Paddington); E. V. Corbett (Mitcham);  
A. J. Wells (Ilford).  
*Kent* : J. E. V. Birch (Folkestone).  
*Midland* : S. Atkin (Smethwick); W. Pearson (Birmingham).  
*North-Eastern* : G. S. D. Lindsay (Tynemouth).  
*North-Western* : J. C. Harrison (Liverpool); J. Hammond, C. Ardern  
(Manchester).  
*South-Eastern* : Miss G. L. Dean (Worthing).

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*South Wales* : Miss M. James (Cardiff).

*Wessex* : E. A. Clough (Southampton).

*Yorkshire* : H. Bateson (Leeds); R. F. Drewery (Hull).

*Hon. Librarian* : H. C. Twaits.

*Hon. Membership Secretary* : G. Wiggs.

### ANNUAL ELECTION

We, the Scrutineers appointed to supervise the ballot for the election of eight National Councillors for the year 1940, hereby declare the result to be as follows:

#### *Elected :*

|                   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| W. H. Phillips    | . | . | . | . | . | 633 |
| D. H. Halliday    | . | . | . | . | . | 627 |
| S. W. Martin      | . | . | . | . | . | 609 |
| A. R. Hewitt      | . | . | . | . | . | 581 |
| A. Ll. Carver     | . | . | . | . | . | 527 |
| R. L. W. Collison | . | . | . | . | . | 498 |
| W. Best Harris    | . | . | . | . | . | 426 |
| Miss M. B. Jones  | . | . | . | . | . | 424 |

#### *Not elected :*

|               |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| J. Hammond    | . | . | . | . | . | 417 |
| E. V. Corbett | . | . | . | . | . | 374 |

772 valid papers were received and counted.

2 papers were disqualified.

7 papers were received too late for counting.

E. R. BROWNING.

W. KELLY.

D. E. COULT (*Hon. Sec.*).

CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY,  
598, FULHAM ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W.6.

January 25th, 1940.

### GREATER LONDON DIVISION

A meeting of the Division will be held jointly with the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association on March 27th at Chaucer House at 3.30 p.m. The meeting will be in the form of an American forum, with a principal speaker (Mr. Stanley Snaith), and six

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subsidiary speakers whose duty it will be to criticize the paper given by the principal speaker.

The idea is original in this country and should provoke a debate of stimulating quality. Members are urged to make a special effort to attend.



### CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Courses, in all sections, are arranged each season to run from April to May of the following year, and from November to December of the following year. The subjects treated, and the respective fees for each section, are as set out below:

*Elementary Section.*—The course covers the whole of the Library Association requirements for this section. Fee, £1 13s.

*Intermediate Section.*—*Part 1*, Library Classification ; *Part 2*, Library Cataloguing. Total inclusive fee, £2 5s. Either section may, however, be taken separately for a fee of £1 6s. 6d.

*Final Section.*—*Part 1*, English Literary History. Fee, £1 13s. *Part 2*, Bibliography and Book Selection and Historical Bibliography. Fee, £2 3s. 6d. *Part 3*, Advanced Library Administration, including either of the specialized alternatives. Fee, £2 3s. 6d.

*Non-members of the Library Association are charged double fees.*

Students residing in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland receive a supply of exercise books and postage wrappers. Overseas students are required to supply their own stationery.

*Applications.*—Students wishing to enter for any course must obtain an application form and send it, together with the necessary fee, to Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24. Applications must reach the above before 20th March and 20th October for the April and November courses respectively. After these dates no applications will be considered.

Before entering for a course, students are advised to make themselves familiar with the regulations governing the examinations, as printed in the *Library Association year-book*, as it is neither possible to postpone a course nor to have the fee returned in respect of any application made in error.

*Note.*—Students will not receive any part of a course until at least ten days after the closing date for applications.



### BIRMINGHAM SUMMER SCHOOL, 1940

It is hoped that the Birmingham Summer School will not be allowed to lapse because of the war.

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Tentative arrangements are in hand, and, if sufficient students enrol, a School may be held during the fortnight 12th to 24th August, 1940.

Those who would join the School, if held, should send their names to the Hon. Secretary, Library Association Summer School, Reference Library, Birmingham, 1, not later than 31st March, 1940. This preliminary information will not commit students in any way, but will merely be a guide to the Committee in deciding whether it is practicable to proceed with arrangements.



## Council Notes

THE Council met on 13th February, and the 1940 President, Mr. T. I. M. Clulow, took the Chair. After a welcome to new members and a vote of thanks to those retiring, the Council settled down to a long agenda. In accordance with war-time economy measures passed by the last special meeting of the Council, it was resolved that some £383 be paid over from the Association's balances to the Library Association. It was resolved that the publication of *Sequel stories* should be proceeded with during 1940, and that Mr. W. Best Harris' *Primer of cataloguing* be published early in 1941. The standing committees of the Council were appointed, and will meet whenever necessary. The following were elected as representatives on committees of the Library Association Council:—Education: Mr. Phillips; Membership: Mr. Wiggs; Publications: Mr. Stevenson.

The Education Secretary announced that a day revision school would probably be held again this year, if sufficient support were forthcoming. It was resolved that out-of-pocket expenses continue to be paid to National Councillors and Divisional Representatives.

Two important resolutions were carried and forwarded for the consideration of the L.A. Council. The first was that properly organized publicity is of the utmost importance to the library service, and that the Library Association be requested to appoint a Public Relations Officer, with local officers in each of the branches of the L.A. The second resolution is of the utmost importance to all assistants: "*That the L.A. be requested to make a definitive statement on the application of the schedule of Reserved Occupations to librarians in the service of local authorities.*" In the course of the debate, it was stated that the ultimate decision was with the local authority, and that librarians, on registration, should describe themselves *exactly* rather than vaguely, e.g. "Senior Assistant Librarian, Blankborough Council" rather than "Librarian."

Finally the Council considered the status of members in H.M. Forces, and resolved that certain recommendations be sent to the Library Associa-



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tion. As far as those members already in the Forces are concerned, library representatives are urged to forward the ASSISTANT to the home addresses of those members, or to send a list of home addresses to the Hon. Membership Secretary, who will arrange for delivery.

## Valuations

S. H. Horrocks

VALUATIONS is a feature which has been singularly well endowed in the past by a number of distinguished contributors. It has not built up its reputation accidentally, having been kept going merely to fill these pages. The feature has, on the contrary, fully paid its way and has been maintained by those qualities of good writing and sound criticism which make of an article something constructive and useful. Mr. R. L. W. Collison, who now discontinues this side of his many-faceted activity, has contributed to this reputation no less than those who preceded him, and our regular readers will no doubt miss greatly his facile pen and appreciative eye. It would scarcely be courteous of me to take from him, without due acknowledgment, a pen which he has used so vigorously and well during the past twelve months. So my wish must be to attain the standard he has set.

The batch of material which awaits my attention is abnormally large, consisting of twenty annual reports and a mass of journals and booklists. The reports emanate from libraries large and small, and are themselves large and small, but not, I fear, relatively; the booklists and miscellaneous material, too, vary considerably, and are more insinuatingly attractive than the former. They will, however, be left till last.

On a first look over, palatable form of the annual reports will be our first criterion of judgment, necessarily so because of the mental uplift they afford. Out, then, come *Bristol*, *Lowestoft*, *Kettering*, and *Luton*. Few can look at "Reading in Bristol" without a feeling of well-being, mingled, perhaps, with a dash of awe and envy. As noble a production as any epicure could wish for, and as filled with good fare. *Bristol* has an annual issue of 2½ million books, sent out to over 75,000 people, and with the issue now showing a twofold increase within the last decade *Bristol* may well remark that the year has been one of outstanding success. *Lowestoft's* library, like its report, is struggling still against space. Its activities, however, fit nicely into five pages of closely printed matter. With issues at 306,412 from a stock of 34,482 the figures are sound without calling for special comment. But a book and binding fund of £1,378, 42 per cent. of the total expenditure, is worth more than a meed of praise; we raise our hats. I am very doubtful myself, however, of the salutary effect, as the

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librarian puts it, of a charge of 3d. for adult and 2d. for junior tickets renewable *yearly*. I should rather be inclined to alter that word salutary to insanitary. Physically, the report is a charming production, with the possible proviso that Gill lower case, so small as this, is not too satisfactory, especially when it is a little over-inked.

*Kettering*, with the dignity of its black and white cover, Garamond caps, and borough coat of arms, invites, nay compels, one to look inside. Opening it with eager fingers we find, as we had expected to, a nicely written report covering six pages; we find also that *Kettering* have made reciprocal arrangements with over 100 boroughs for the interchange of tickets, an item which causes deep reflection, but which we pass off with a sigh and pass on. We find from a population of 34,000 an issue of 213,000, the highest in the history of the library; borrowers numbering 7,340, but, bless my soul, the twin graces of art and music would seem to be supine in *Kettering*, for only 167 special art and music tickets have been taken out. The work of the *Luton* libraries during the year is summed up on the front cover of their excellent report, "INFORMATION, EDUCATION, RECREATION." We take a deep breath and plunge inside; a waft of fresh air reaches us when we see that the title page is backed by a note saying that the text is set in Linotype Estienne, with the title page (most of it) and headings in Centaur, Bruce Rogers' most beautiful creation. That *Luton* libraries are moving, and onwards, is evidenced everywhere: the report says so, and we believe it; study of the figures bears it out. Total expenditure £6,240 (but no details given); issues at 466,000 show a notable rise, but the librarian is not loath to note the unhealthy disparity between central and branch issues. It is a joy also to find the existence of a true Information Bureau, distinct from the reference library, the most searching question of the year being for the diameter of the hind leg of a fly.

One finds but few original or illuminating points in the reading of annual reports. I can record only two, though I may have missed twenty-two. The first of them is contained in aristocratic *Westminster's* report. It concerns the setting-up of a special Fine Arts Library, housed in a converted magazine-room, where have been shelved all the resources, lending and reference, of the borough's art collection. I know of no other library where this experiment has been tried, but certainly on the face of it the step seems to be a logical development in the larger public libraries, provided, of course, that the collection of books is of sufficient value to warrant shelving them together. No one will doubt for one moment the bibliographical importance of *Westminster's* art collection, for it is certainly the best among the London boroughs, and it will be a trial which will pay all large libraries to keep an eye on. *Cardiff* is the other

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contributor to our gallery of originalities, with a statistical teaser. They have in circulation 31,691 tickets, but a count of the books actually on issue revealed that there were 13,743. Many libraries make this count, but Cardiff goes further and shows that of this figure 7,351 were non-fiction, 5,734 fiction, and 658 junior. Very revealing figures, illustrating a point which is a commonplace among librarians, that although fiction shows a higher percentage of issues, because of its greater turnover, it does not attract so many readers as the non-fiction section. It is difficult to convince the layman of this point, but a figure such as Cardiff gives would go a long way towards doing so. Out of 38,888 tickets Bradford had 14,560 tickets in use at one time. It would seem that about 35 per cent. represents the average number of tickets in use at one time throughout the country. A small enough figure, to be sure.

There are seven reports coming from London or its vicinity. *Westminster's*, just mentioned, catches the eye first because of its large format. No typographical elegancies here, oh ! dear no, a straightforward plum pudding, without grace of brandy and sauce. The tide of book issues has been out at Westminster for a few years, but 1938-9 shows a welcome leap to the near million mark. If this were the yardstick of a library's value, then it wouldn't seem to justify an expenditure of £26,000, but a glance at the variety of service mentioned in this report reveals that it was money well spent. *Finchley* and *Brentford* and *Chiswick* issue duplicated reports, both satisfying in appearance, with Finchley's cover simple and inviting without being austere. The former borough is most notable: a membership figure of 6,143, a total membership figure of 19,727, 29 per cent. of the population, and an issue of 540,000, are surely remarkable for a new branch library with only six years' work behind it. It is grand also to notice that the basis of book selection "excludes the sensational and poorly written novel." Altogether a live and flourishing neighbourhood. The Chiswick service is also a wide and interesting one, and its stock of books, 74,000 for a population of 61,000, bespeaks more than an average interest on the part of the committee. The other four reports are from *Barking*, *East Ham*, *Acton*, and *Beddington* and *Wallington*. *Barking's* jubilee year report is printed from cover to cover in Gill Sans; paper "ye awful olde arte," but nevertheless giving a clean look to the whole. The figures are quite adequate, with issues of 676,043, divided equally between central and branch. Thirty-two per cent. of borrowers to population is excellent. *Acton's* report is a very pleasant one, the first one to be printed for thirty years. A rise in spirits notes two jumps in issues, one of 38 per cent. in music, and, in the total, of 80,000 to 354,675. An improving service which I shall keep an eye on. The compositor of *East Ham's* report is evidently an addict of the spices, for

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he likes change: I can trace at a glance twelve different type faces. But even Grotesque could not hide the value of an issue of 836,234, and the amazing number and variety of their lectures. *Beddington and Wallington's* number of tickets in force still exceeds the number of books in the library. How the librarian must sigh for all the readers to come in at the same time.

Flourish of trumpets and feeling of awe! Issues at 2,925,295. A slight decrease this year for which adequate excuses are made: but a decrease in the music issue of 25 per cent. is not commented upon. The immense work of the branches, travelling libraries, commercial library, etc., is recorded in a factual and retiring fashion which is both becoming and impressive. Thirty-eight thousand books added to stock; 38,000 withdrawn. Search of the report from which the above facts are culled reveals that the place is *Bradford*. Surely Dame Modesty need not be courted to such an extent, even in dourest Yorkshire. *Cardiff's* report deserves an article to itself, so, as space is limited, I shall leave it until next time.

The only two county library reports come from *Leicester* and *Dumfries*. The former's report opens with a well-deserved tribute to the voluntary local librarians, who form the backbone of a system which last year issued 801,635 books. The Exhibition Book Van, in its first year, was a complete success. *Dumfriesshire's* cover is mostly of Gill, and introduces well a report showing an issue of 476,359, and a total of 23,304 borrowers out of a population of 80,000. The stock of books is 108,872, a large number to keep alive on a book grant of £1,348.

*Lincoln's* report has rather a dull cover, but apart from that is delightful. Printed in Plantin, it achieves distinction quietly. An excellent analysis of the year's issue (321,303) at the beginning of the report adds piquancy to our further reading; and three pleasant surprises are in store for us; an increase of 24 per cent. in children's issues is due to a new library; book fund of £1,455, 33 per cent. of total expenditure; and, thank you, Lincoln, for putting in your report the period of validity of your tickets. Tales of evacuation problems lurk behind *Northampton's* imposing cover. They issued 3,819 tickets to evacuated children, and held special classes in the Reference Library. A town from Yorkshire completes the batch. *Keighley* records an increase in issues of 42 per cent. to 365,909, a truly amazing performance which is described in the report as satisfactory, but which must be the result of prodigious and continuous hard work. The format of *Keighley's* report is plutocratic, but the hard paper has made impression difficult, and with the type rather large the result is somewhat uneven.

The booklists are many, and, like running water, leave one hot and

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cold. The colonel of the regiment is the *Croydon* "Reader's index," with its Rockwell cover, which this time has a four-page write-up on the library service in war-time. One point of general interest which emerges is that the non-fiction ticket can now be used for any type of book, an idea that might well be copied elsewhere. The booklist, as usual, is exceptionally wide in scope, giving full bibliographical details and most useful annotations. Other old favourites include the *Coventry* "Bookshelf" for November-December, and the *Halifax* "Reader's guide" for both November and December. *Coventry's* list, having a cover with three spires, two colours, and Gill, also has some remarks, not very illuminating, on libraries in war-time. But with a library's service such as this, one could await being "sent to Coventry" with pleasurable anticipation. *Halifax*, like *Coventry*, adopts Dewey headings under which to list the books, and the publication, despite a somewhat spiky type, has a spacious, airy look about it.

*Stretford's* booklist is printed in a type-face with character, Plantin. The appearance is solid and even, the headings chosen for the books are good, but the list is perhaps a little arid owing to a tendency to lump too many books under one heading. Major Morris's tales of London fires, for instance, appear under the heading "Keeping healthy." There is also to hand the *Hyde* "Bookman" for Christmas, *Worthing* "Quarterly" for January, "Book quarterly" from *Burton upon Trent*, "Booklist for January" from *Cheltenham*, "Some new books for December" from *St. Albans*. *St. Albans* and *Hyde* prefer very large type for their authors, but *Hyde* stands the strain the better owing to the long annotations, which, although well written, seem to be an exercise in virtuosity, and could be cut down. Four of these five covers are in Sans type, one, I think, *Granby*, the other three *Gill*, which is often used in these lists *ad nauseam*. *Worthing* shares with *Hyde* the most attractive cover, and has as an introduction a very good article on the growth of the children's book, which could conveniently have had a bibliography tacked on. *Cheltenham*, I am glad to see, has some out-of-the-way books on its list, showing that they cast their book selection net wide, but a title page with an ugly figure 8 bang in the middle and a piece of fungus across the top in a foul type-face spoil a handsome appearance. *Burton upon Trent's* list bears comparison with the best of them, and is printed in a Plain-Jane-and-no-nonsense style.

Two duplicated lists, "Books for the new year" from *Failsworth*, and one from New Zealand, the *Canterbury* "University College record" for October, well bear mention. *Failsworth's* fourth list is adequate in most ways, the books being some quite old and some quite new, but oh! those crosses indicating well-written and interesting books; to say that they

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make me cross is an understatement; suffice it to say that Doreen Wallace gets a cross, but not Turgenev, dear me no.

I thought I had come across something original when I saw "Why not improve your indoor lighting?" peeping out from my pile of lists, but was disappointed on extracting the toothsome morsel to find that it was the back cover of the *Portsmouth "Reader"* for January, advertising the local electricity undertaking! Not that Portsmouth cover is poor; on the contrary, it is one of the most distinguished of the bunch, but something out of the ordinary is always a delight. The journal includes a good article on the work of the reference library, but I have never seen Fortescue's *History of the British army* spelt Fortesque before. The *Derbyshire "Booklist"* for December uses for its front cover the very excellent Verona titling in two colours. The journal as a whole is an accomplished production; it gives information where it is needed (in this issue on war-time activities); it alphabetizes its books under general subject headings, and the books themselves are a grand lot. The list of novels, however, is meagre: there might at least have been one page of them out of twenty-seven.

The lists of books on special subjects have been left to the end, but they provide the most stimulating reading. The R.A.F. have nothing on *Sheffield*: the latter drop on us twenty-two pamphlets and broadsides, ranging from one to eight pages, in colours as bright and plentiful as those on Joseph's coat. All the subjects are written up, with short booklists tacked on, apparently as an afterthought. These introductions all maintain a high standard, and there are one or two little gems of essays, making full play with the arts of the essayist: topical allusion, quotation, imagination, and poetic style. The ones I like best are "Ireland's pen," "In many moods" (on essays), and "On talk and talkers." Others cover "Feminine progress," games of all kinds, "Model-making," the arts and crafts, "Homer," "Art," and "Faiths old and new." Alas, even Homer sometimes nods, and the I of *Introducing* on the cover of most of these lists strikes a jarring note. The excellent series of pamphlets issued by the *County Libraries Section* of the Library Association are now graced by lists on House and Home, and Economics. It is sufficient praise by now to say that these lists are as good as those previously issued and are a joy to handle.

Three duplicated lists from *Burton upon Trent* tell of a librarian alive to modern tendencies. "Modern poetry" is good, except that Robert Service comes next to William Shakespeare. "Power" and "Commerce" can be criticized. The former is a list of technical books which is woefully inadequate; a selection it may be, but a selection of books on electrical engineering, for instance, should not omit mention of Meares and Neale,

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Maccall and Cotton. The list of inadequacies could be multiplied tenfold, but need not be here.

Topicalities account for four lists: "Europe in crisis" from *Cardiff*, a charming little handlist in cream, brown, and Gill; "Air-raid precautions" from *Coventry*, a duplicated list giving more items than I had thought were published; "Hitler and company" from *Acton*, a list which nearly blacks me out; "What shall we eat in war-time?" from *Orpington and Petts Wood*, a nice little duplicated list which goes farther than its title and brings in books on vegetable culture, fruit growing, and poultry keeping; and, finally, "International relations, 1870 to date," from *Hyde*, compiled for the W.E.A., is all such a list ought to be. Two duplicated lists on technical subjects are ideal in their way. *Luton's* technical bulletin has a grandly designed cover which puts me in a good mood for the interior, which puts me in a better mood to look at *Sheffield's* research bulletin on the hardening of steels, the contents of which I am not competent to judge, but which looks the part, sharp and shining, to perfection. *Wakefield's* select list of historical tales was a happy thought. It is well conceived, but the execution may well be criticized a little in so far as it is geographical rather than historical when such books as *Isherwood's Good-bye to Berlin* and *Golding's Mr. Emmanuel* are included.

Neat little handlists come from *Tottenham*, *Ealing*, *Lancashire*, and *Rotherham*. All without exception are in Gill. *Ealing* and *Tottenham* use catch headings for their books, the former's individual list having such a gem as "Public cheer" to cover books on the local, Lewis Carroll, card games, and ice dancing; and the latter's list for November having a delightful parody on the "Pied piper," signed "L. P.", concerning evacuation. *Lancashire* has had to combine "For lighter moments" and "Knowledge in the making" into "New books," presumably for economy's sake. The loss is one chiefly of originality, for "New books for January" has a fine list of books which are up to date, yes, fairly up to date, reminding one of *Rotherham's* list, whose books are new, but not too new.

Introducing *Hove* through a lovely little handbook to their service. Printed in blue on canary yellow, the Garamond type gives an eighteenth-century grace to a charming modern product. Introduction to *Hyde*; introduction to *Glossop*: two delightful little handbooks, persuasive and respectful. In Gill, blue on grey, they are twins with clean faces. *Burton upon Trent's* duplicated "War-time service" also can be greatly commended, happily including a plan of the lending library.

N.B.—Will libraries kindly forward material for this article in future to me at The Public Library, Porchester Road, London, W.2.



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### Reading-room or Rest-room?<sup>1</sup>

H. R. J. Boulter

FOR the second time within ten years librarians are being confronted by the inexorable demands of economy committees who will, apparently, require a general reduction in expenditure during the war years. From public-library expenditure they hope to retrieve a substantial amount, as they do not yet regard the library service as being absolutely essential. Moreover, the fatalistic attitude adopted by the professional journals suggests that librarians themselves have little faith in the valid contention that in wartime their duties increase in scope and importance and that expenditure should, therefore, be increased rather than subjected to heavy cuts. This paper does not pretend to discover whether we failed during the "expansion years" to impress upon the nation the value of public libraries, nor does it suggest a means of redeeming our lost opportunities. The present state of world affairs is not pertinent to such a campaign.

What we should do, however, is to ensure that any economies are judicious and compatible with the maintenance of the essentials of the service and, in particular, to see that book funds are not lopped without restraint as they were at the time of the economic depression ten years ago. Librarians will again be tempted to turn to that expenditure which is not committed in advance by service standards. They may reject a minute examination of our total expenditure on the grounds that it is ineffectual and a waste of time. An unceasing supply of new books in adequate numbers is, however, vital. Rather than a reduction in book-purchasing power, attention should be paid to certain impediments in service which are a subject of concern to many librarians. The diversity of practice in the institutions of different library authorities seems to indicate a lack of unified policy during the last two decades.

The scope of this paper is confined to a branch of the public-library service which is palpably misdirected—the reading-room. The passing of the years since the first Public Libraries Act has witnessed few outward changes in reading-rooms, but uncontrolled development has caused them to become a source of irritation to many librarians and harmful to the reputation of the profession. Reading-rooms have shared in the growth of the library service by an increase in the number of publications provided and by extension of accommodation, but this growth has shown little cognizance of the new problems which arose with each year that passed. Instead, selection was ruled by vociferous, but unrepresentative, public demand, to the detriment of the principles governing periodical

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of *Dacal*.



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provision. This led to an obscurity of the functions of the department, and its consequent misuse by the general public.

The public-library service would be incomplete without the provision of periodical literature, but our selection policy has become so confused as to render indistinct the influencing factors upon which it should be based. Periodical literature is essential to keep up to date the subject representation of the library, and librarians fully appreciate its value in those subjects liable to rapid change and development. If librarians had adhered to the principles of selection instead of permitting subservience to public demand, there would not exist to-day unsatisfactory and multiform standards of reading-room provision.

Earlier generations of librarians may have regarded periodicals (and I use the term to include newspapers) as closely connected with book stock—a view which probably persisted in practice. The modern reading-room, however, is considered as a separate department, and the lack of co-ordination with the reference and lending libraries is to be deplored. For example, subject references to the reading-room periodicals are not provided in our catalogues, nor are dummy guides to be found on the reference-library shelves. Current practice has established so firmly in our minds the detachment of the departments that, even if we had not forsaken the principles of selection, we should have failed to recognize the true functions of periodical provision.

Certain periodicals, it is true, are classed as reference material in many libraries and are kept in the reference library. Nevertheless, the reading-room, or rooms, where there is a distinction between newspaper and magazine provision, takes the larger proportion of our periodicals. The institution of the separate department was probably due to two reasons: the concentration of interest during the currency of the publication; and the format of periodicals, which presents a different problem from that of a book. The separate reading-room seemed to allow the heavy use of periodicals over a short period, and specially designed furniture displayed them in a convenient manner.

Briefly, therefore, the chaotic state of reading-room policy is due to confusion of the principles of selection and lack of co-ordination with other departments, with the result that we are burdened with a function which is inconsistent with the maxims of modern librarianship. The modern reading-room resembles a rest-room rather than a resort of conscientious students in search of the latest literature on their particular subjects; moreover, a census of persons who use the department would reveal a considerably smaller figure than we calculate, and that the illusion of popularity is derived from users who regard the department as a place in which to while away leisure hours. Persons who use it to secure infor-

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mation or read the latest writings on their subjects of study or enquiry are comparatively few and appear to be on the decrease.

Familiar to librarians are the persons who habitually make a morning call and spend several afternoons and evenings each week going the round of the publications. These are the "regulars" who, by their example, lead to a misconception of the functions of the reading-room. They monopolize the larger part of the publications, often depriving bona-fide readers of their use, and even contrive to establish a club atmosphere during those hours when the normal working man and woman is unable to use the department. They spend their time in spasmodic reading, often feigning interest, while maintaining a tireless curiosity regarding other users of the room. Some persons will tell of the uncomfortable scrutiny they receive when they enter, and of their consciousness of an atmosphere which discourages proper use of the publications.

At this point it would be apposite to show how our laxity in the matter of selection principles contributed to the misuse of the reading-room. We permitted ourselves to accept the repeated demands of a few readers for periodicals with little or no subject value and by so doing we encouraged "purposeless" reading. More and more publications of similar type were included, and the misconception of functions increased. Readers now expect to find in the reading-rooms the expensive illustrated weekly reviews, women's magazines, short-story magazines, and similar publications, all valueless in bringing our book stock up to date, but active in emphasizing the fact that we fail to recognize the limits of the department.

Also, the use of the lending library decreases, for it is this department which provides books for recreational reading, and the home fireside is the place where leisure reading should be indulged in. Some librarians will reply by saying that the general public, because they want and pay for them, should be heeded in the choice of periodicals, but I can think of a hundred good reasons why they should not have just what they want. It is our duty to spend public money to the best advantage and to disregard individual demand when it does not serve the interests of the majority.

Librarians should consider the functions of reading-rooms in conjunction with expenditure and, if possible, make economies in the latter which will bring the department into line with the other activities of the service. Expenditure can be reviewed under two headings: that incurred in the purchase of publications and that in maintenance of the separate department. The former should proceed with understanding of the principles of selection already stated and, as a first step, all publications extraneous to these principles should be eliminated, including all ephe-

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meral matter which encourages purposeless reading. Many other magazines add little material to that existing in book form. For instance, the periodical on gardening consists of a cycle of seasonal hints, all of which are already contained in books available for home reading. Provision of more than one periodical on a particular subject is superfluous, especially in view of the rapid waning of interest when the issue is superseded by a new one. The weekly and monthly political-literary review, for example, should not be provided *en masse*, since one of the type serves to provide all the material necessary for study and enquiry. In any case, at the current rate of publication, such matter will rapidly find a more permanent and convenient form in the shape of a book.

Newspapers present a vexed problem. The provision of these in the early days of public libraries can be readily understood, but to-day, when cost is so small and circulation sales so enormous, and when practically every household possesses one or the other, newspaper provision in the present degree is extravagant. The content of newspapers, too, has changed. They no longer contain only legitimate news but include articles on a variety of topics, such as beauty treatment, gardening, sport, and even short stories. "Human interest" provides much of the news; in fact, the modern newspaper is designed to provide the daily literary fare of the purchaser. Comparative reading of various versions of events is overrated in value, and the primary object of the majority of the occupiers of our slopes is the passing of leisure time rather than a keen desire to acquire knowledge of the previous day's events. We can apply our principles of selection to newspapers and, consequently, the newspaper which gives the fullest account of events should be provided for information and reference. *The Times*, which is the only British paper equipped with an index, would be chosen by most librarians, but local newspapers will also be purchased for ultimate use in the local collection.

A reduction in periodical purchase will not impair the intrinsic functions of periodical provision but will effect a considerable economy. Examination of maintenance expenditure can be similarly productive. The re-establishment of our principles of selection will result in a decline in the "popularity" of the reading-room, although the legitimate users will continue to be served. In consequence, it will probably be found unnecessary to maintain a separate department, and convenient to merge it with the reference library.

We already keep some periodicals in the reference library, and although the line of demarcation is not clear, they are usually those which deal with the more erudite subjects. Fear of mutilation and the consequent existence of gaps in a set, however, often exerts an influence in arriving at a decision. The offer for sale of superseded issues of library

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periodicals is a fairly common, but not sound, practice. If a periodical is purchased it adds new material on a certain subject, and surely it is equally valuable after a new issue has appeared. To speak of the transient interest of periodicals is the result of habit; they do not necessarily depreciate in value. Certain matter must naturally lose topicality, but this does not mean loss of interest. All periodical literature which is worth purchasing at all is worth preserving; not all of it permanently, perhaps, but at least until we have proof that it is no longer of any value. As volumes of some periodicals are bound, they may be usefully placed in the lending library.

The current issues of reference periodicals are usually kept together in racks in the traditional manner of the reading-room and, while this model can be followed in the case of all periodicals, it would be logical to keep our periodicals in their shelf positions in accordance with subject classification. This has the advantage of keeping together all issues of a periodical in juxtaposition with other material on the subject, of making the reader aware of the material contained in back issues, and of increasing the understanding of the classification scheme. There will be persons who will at first object to the fusion of the departments because of the subsequent formality in consulting periodicals, but legitimate users will appreciate the assistance of the reference librarian and the hallowed atmosphere of the reference library as being more conducive to study.

The reputation of the service would ultimately benefit by the abolition of the reading-room. To say the least it is an untidy department, and even the alertness of the attendant fails to convince all users of the need for observance of regulations. The people who use the department are largely composed of certain types, and most librarians admit that the atmosphere of the room is prejudicial to its use by all sections of the public. Librarians are also concerned at the abuse which it encounters, and it is only vigilant supervision which prevents a constant buzz of conversation, surreptitious drying of wet clothes in bad weather and, in some cases, especially on wet days, many persons furtively attempt to eat their lunches, and there is more than one reading-room which, being conveniently situated, is used as a bus waiting-room. The magazines and newspapers are thoughtlessly mutilated, some by coupon hunters, others by persons too lazy to copy a paragraph of interest, and all librarians are familiar with the ravages of that type of person who collects "artistic" photographs. We are still unable to prevent some persons indulging in the obnoxious practices for which the Libraries Offences Act was especially designed.

On the other hand, the reading-room will be missed by the unemployed, who find it a boon in occupying their long hours of inactivity. Much as

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librarians appreciate that it is incumbent upon every local authority to provide a social centre for such unfortunate persons, this function should not fall upon the library committee. Some people will protest that they find valuable aid in job-seeking by consulting the advertisement pages of newspapers, but here again, we overlap the work of another body. The local office of the Ministry of Labour, rather than the public library, should provide information regarding situations advertised in the press.

The abolition of a separate department for periodicals will save all expenditure at present absorbed in fuel (heating and lighting), cleaning (materials and wages), attendant's wages, deterioration of furniture, etc. Rent and rates can also be saved if we make the room available as a wartime contingency to some branch of national service. The amount, together with that saved in periodical provision, would satisfy, to a large degree, the demands of national economy. Librarians will hope that, when peace is restored, pre-war limits of expenditure will be reinstated, and this will allow many libraries, especially those in small towns at present overburdened with large reading-rooms, to make their reference and lending-library book stock more efficient. The freed space can be well utilized in relieving congestion, or in providing, where none exists, lectures and children's libraries.

Courage will be needed to carry out the suggested reforms and, while most librarians will welcome the abolition of the reading-room, some will refer to its supposed value in attracting new readers. From the present reading-room, however, the newcomer gets an erroneous impression of the standard of the library service and would receive a better introduction if the periodicals were in the reference library. We know, from experience, that the public will fight tooth and nail when it thinks any service is about to be withdrawn; but in wartime all reasonable persons are aware that far-reaching economies must be effected. They should be confident that librarians will take those steps which are in their best interests.

If librarians themselves have doubts as to the wisdom of the reform of the reading-room, let them examine the experiments of those far-sighted borough librarians who have excluded it from their service, and the county library services which, as a general rule, exclude them from their branch library policy. The statements on the abuse of reading-rooms may not apply to every individual library service but the impression has been derived from general experience of these departments. It is hoped that this paper will suggest that the views of librarians on this problem should receive further ventilation.

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### "Men of good will"

ONE reader, at any rate, has waited with impatience for this publication,<sup>1</sup> and has read it with excitement. That provides sufficient reason for this review, coupled with the hope that a few more readers may be induced to share my enthusiasm.

There is little doubt that *Men of good will* is one of those books which increases a publisher's prestige, rather than his bank balance; all the more praise, then, to Peter Davies for continuing the work so well begun by Lovat Dickson (though I wish at the same time we might have had the thirteenth and fourteenth books published by Knopf in America). The lukewarm enthusiasm of our readers when confronted with the nine volumes of this book is well enough known to librarians. It seems a formidable task; but there are few modern novels in our libraries which are its equal. The scope of this work and its complete integrity make it one of the great books of our time. Romain's irony, his insight into character, are not uncommon gifts of the French novelist; rarer are his genius for painting a huge panorama, his capacity for making detail absorbing, and his all-embracing interest in humanity.

Especially in the new volume are these gifts shown: from the first paragraph to the last we march inexorably to the holocaust of Verdun. The first two chapters, a survey of the early months of the first European War, have a bitter irony almost unbearable in 1940. Throughout the book we meet again the characters we know so well from previous volumes: Jerphanion and Jallez, those articulate friends; Clanricard the schoolmaster, now a sergeant; Haverkamp growing fat on war profits; while new characters, notably General Gouraud, appear for the first time.

"I believe," says the author, "that the adventure of humanity is essentially an adventure of groups. It is also an adventure of individuals in conflict with groups and with each other." *Men of good will* is the ultimate expression of this philosophy, and is worthy of the attention of all interested in the literature of our time.

W. B. S.

<sup>1</sup> Romain, Jules. *Men of good will*, Vols. XV and XVI: Verdun. Peter Davies. 10s. 6d.

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### Divisional Activities

IT is gratifying to note that in practically all the Divisions something approaching the normal programmes of peace-time has now been planned and is already being carried out. In one or two cases only have Divisions decided that meetings in war-time are impracticable. All Divisions report increase in the work of the various libraries in the area so that the extra amount of work involved for the Secretaries and the members of Committees is no light undertaking. In three Divisions new Secretaries have taken over: in the Greater London Division Mr. Horrocks of Paddington replaces Mr. Holliday of Hackney, in South Wales Miss Margaret James replaces Mr. J. Williams, and in the Wessex Division Mr. Clough of Southampton has taken the place of Mr. Ives of Bournemouth.

Certain Divisions have always been accustomed to combine with Branches of the Library Association for the purpose of meetings; for example, the West Midland Division with the Birmingham and District Branch and the Greater London Division with the London and Home Counties Branch. The Kent Division has now decided to hold all meetings jointly with the Kent Sub-Branch of the London and Home Counties Branch. These meetings are to be held every two months at Canterbury and Maidstone alternately. Perhaps a similar combination might be practicable in districts where meetings of the Division alone are at present impossible. The first meeting of this new series in Kent has already been held and proved very successful although the weather was definitely unhelpful. As it was the Annual Meeting there was a certain amount of business, and the paper following was by Mr. F. Higenbottam, the Librarian of Canterbury. Mr. Higenbottam, unlike most speakers at recent library meetings, refused to say anything about the present situation and instead dealt with an interesting technical subject, "An Experiment in cataloguing: Library of Congress cards in an English public library."

All the other meetings of which I have received any information deal directly or indirectly with the subject of libraries in war-time. The London Joint Meeting to which reference has already been made listened to the varying views of a London librarian, a County librarian, and an Urban librarian on the problems of staff, book supply, evacuated children, and air-raid precautions. At the Annual Meeting of the Devon and Cornwall Division held at Newton Abbot, Mr. Turner, Borough Librarian of Taunton, dealt with similar topics under the title of "Where do we go from here?" His emphasis was laid on the necessity for a forward policy, so that while libraries might give useful information service now, even

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perhaps acting as centres for Government propaganda, the main effort should be devoted to preparing for the reconstruction of the community life after the war. Mr. Turner was particularly insistent that any economy there might have to be should not be on staff or stock but on publicity expenditure. The resulting discussion showed sharply divided opinion about Government propaganda in libraries and raised the further points of the inadvisability of sending withdrawn books to camps or centres and the possibility of excess purchase of books to guard against rising prices or possible shortage. Wessex, on the other hand, which has also held its Annual General Meeting, seems to be of the opinion that this is a time for library publicity rather than economizing in that direction.

The South-Eastern Meeting in January was an excellent example of getting all points of view, which is one of the most valuable reasons for holding a meeting at all. The title was "Ideals and realities" and the papers were given by two Chief Librarians, Mr. Davies of Hove and Mr. Hynes of Eastbourne, and by two Junior Assistants, Miss Gordon and Mr. Mabey, both of Brighton.

The East Midland Division has adopted the method of holding small group meetings instead of attempting a meeting for the whole Division. One such meeting was held at Nottingham in December and although there were only twenty-four present every single member of the audience took part in the discussion. The subject was "That the public library exists for the purpose of education, not recreation," a motion proposed by Mr. Enser and Miss Bertholdt and opposed by Mr. Matthews and Mr. Martin. The motion had to be amended to read the "The Public library exists firstly for education," and even then I understand it was lost. Nevertheless as a debate it was a great success. In contrast to this the South Wales Division reports that the first activities to be resumed since the outbreak of war will be the educational aids to students. It is pleasant to reflect that the A.A.L. exists for both education and recreation.

E. M. E.

## ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS

A Meeting of the above Association will be held at Chaucer House on March 13th, at 3 p.m. Subject: "Jack Sprat and his problems as a publisher," by Miss M. C. Carey (of the editorial staff of Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.).



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